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## Bridge St. dam project that DNR says it plans to reject will get another look at public informational meeting

A Grafton fish-passage project the Department of Natural Resources said it is poised to reject will be reviewed during a public informational meeting Monday, June 27.

During the meeting from 4:30 to 7 p.m. at Village Hall, 860 Badger Cir., DNR officials will accept comments and questions on the proposal, which calls for construction of a 650-foot fish passage at the Bridge Street dam.

The project, designed to allow native aquatic species such as trout and salmon to travel upstream to spawn, was expected to be built on the east bank of the Milwaukee River this summer as part of federally funded restoration efforts coordinated by Ozaukee County.

The county was awarded $7.2 million, including $5.2 million from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, for the Grafton fish passage and other improvement projects.

In addition to having the project approved by the village last December, the county received approval from the Army Corps of Engineers and a review without objections from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

However, the DNR informed local officials this month that it plans to deny a permit application for the project because of concerns about the possible spread of invasive fish species and a deadly fish virus. DNR fisheries supervisor Randy Schumacher said the denial would also be based on concerns about the box-culvert design of the passage, which he said would not provide sufficient safeguards against invasive species.

County and village officials expressed surprise and disappointment with the DNR's preliminary decision, saying they believed the project was headed for approval because the department has provided input into the design for months.

"We are still planning to get clarification and more information and hoping there will be reconsideration of the decision," Andrew Struck, county director of planning and parks, said last week.

The fish passage was also originally backed by the DNR as an alternative to removing the dam, which the department proposed to the village in 2009.

Although the village was poised to raze the landmark, a petition drive led by the Save the Dam Association led to a binding referendum in April 2010 in which voters overwhelmingly supported preserving the dam until at least 2019.

In addition to input received at Monday's meeting, the DNR will accept written comments on the

fish-passage project for 10 more days before making a final decision.

The county has already spent $300,000 of NOAA grant money on design work for the fish passage, which is expected to cost another $1.3 million to build.

With the future of the project in doubt, officials have voiced concern about whether the county will have to repay the $300,000